

Demand for secondary career and technical education

Secondary career and technical education (CTE) prepares students both for work immediately after high school and for continued education and training. There is student and employer demand for both.

Student need

Given the frequency of work after graduation, it is important that schools provide students with the skills that employers need. While some students go on to postsecondary education in later years, many do not and the only public education and training they receive is during K-12. In fact, 25 percent of Washington’s population 25 years of age or older has only a high school diploma or GED. CTE, however, is a choice not only for students who go straight to work; CTE completers (54 percent) are as likely as other graduates to go on to further education and training the year after high school.

- About 34 percent of high school graduates work and do not attend postsecondary education during the year after graduation.
- At least 80 percent of high school graduates either work exclusively or work while attending postsecondary education during the year after graduation.

Employer need

There are jobs available for CTE graduates (Figure 1). Forty-two percent of job openings in Washington require little or no postsecondary training. Another 37 percent of jobs require some postsecondary training but not a four-year degree.

For those students going straight to work, CTE prepares students with the types of skills that employers are looking for in high school graduates. Figure 2 shows that based upon a 2003 statewide survey of employers, employers who hire mostly workers with only a high school level of education most frequently report trouble finding job applicants with job-specific skills and general workplace skills. This is not to suggest that academic skills are unimportant; it suggests that high schools should be preparing more young people with better job-specific and general workplace skills in addition to academic ones.

FIGURE 1
Education Levels Required for Expected Job Openings Between 2002 and 2012 in Washington State

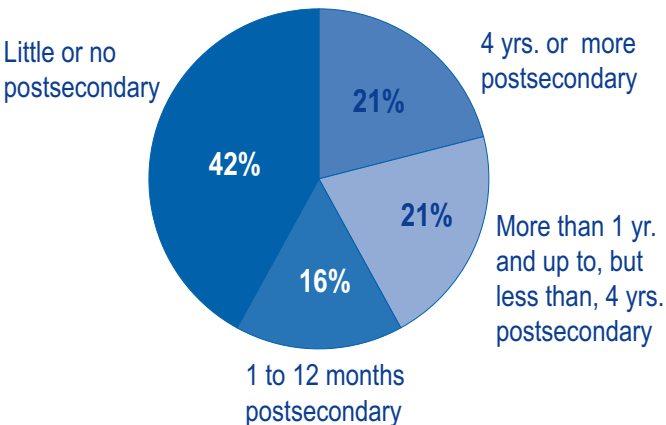
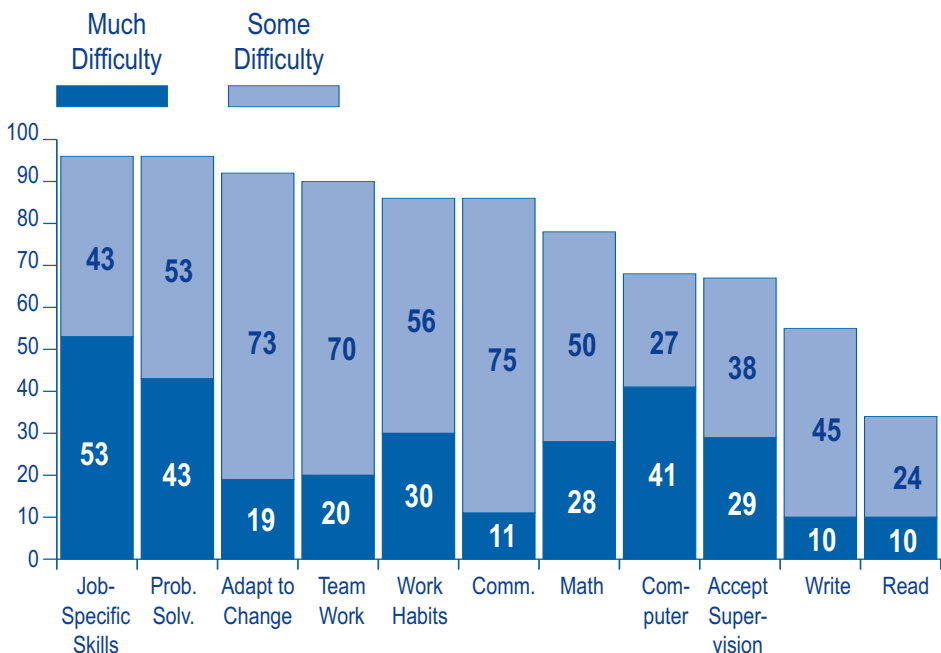


FIGURE 2
Difficulty Finding Employee Skills Among Employers Mostly Hiring at the High School Level
(percentage reporting difficulty finding type of skill among firms with difficulty finding qualified applicants)



Vision

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Undersupply of CTE completers

There are about 60,000 high school graduates per year in Washington. Of these, just 12,000, or 20 percent, complete a sequence of vocational courses. About half of these go on to postsecondary education or training during the year after graduation. This leaves just 10 percent of high school graduates who complete a vocational sequence but go to work immediately after graduation. This 10 percent contrasts with the 34 percent of all high school graduates who go to work after graduation, most of whom do not have job-specific skills. This helps explain why employers who hire mostly workers with only a high school level of education report difficulty finding workers with job-specific skills.

Among high school graduates, only about 20 percent complete a CTE program.

Results

During the third quarter after completion, at least 78 percent of CTE students are employed and/or attending further education or training. Among those who are working and not going to school, the median wage is \$8.25 per hour, and the median annual earnings are \$10,354. Of employers who recently hired a CTE completer, 81 percent report they are either very or somewhat satisfied with the overall quality of their work.

Employment and earnings are better than those for similar individuals who did not complete CTE. Figure 3 shows net impacts for CTE completers over and above the outcomes for a comparison group of individuals with similar demographic characteristics and grade point averages.

FIGURE 3

Net Impacts of Secondary Career and Technical Education

Outcome	3rd Quarter After Leaving Secondary School	3rd Year After Leaving Secondary School
Employment rate	+5.5%	+5.7%
Hourly wage	+\$0.29	+\$0.50
Annualized earnings	+\$448	+\$1,804

FIGURE 4

Benefits and Costs of Secondary Career and Technical Education Per Student and the Public

Benefit/Cost	First 2.5 Yrs. Student	First 2.5 Yrs. Public	Lifetime Est. Student	Lifetime Est. Public
Earnings	+\$3,041		+\$59,363	
Fringe benefits	+608		+\$11,873	
Taxes	-\$765	+\$765	-\$14,930	+\$14,930
Program costs		-\$870		-\$870

In addition to benefiting the students, the net benefits will pay for themselves through the tax revenues they produce. As shown in Figure 4, the net increase in student earnings will generate tax revenues that far exceed the taxpayer costs.

secondary

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works

- About 34 percent of graduates go directly to work after high school and need employable skills.
- Career and technical education boosts student employment and earnings and generates tax revenues that far exceed the costs of the program.
- Career and technical education completers continue on to higher education at the same rate as other high school graduates.
- More career and technical education is needed to meet student and employer needs.

WASHINGTON STATE

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